

## **Recidivism Reduction Committee Meeting**

Monday, October 15, 2012

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

*Department of Correction*

*24 Wolcott Hill Rd*

*Wethersfield, CT*

**Members In Attendance:** Vivien Blackford (Co-Chair), Maureen Price-Boreland (Co-Chair), Leo Arnone, William Carbone

**Also Participating:** Andrew Clark (IMRP), Sarah White (IMRP), Ivan Kuzyk (OPM), Sarah Russell (Quinnipiac), Linda Meyer (Quinnipiac), David Goshdigian (Quinnipiac), Lauren Siembab (DMHAS), Karl Lewis (DOC)

### **MINUTES**

#### **I. MEETING CONVENED**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 2:05 p.m.

#### **II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 7, 2012**

The minutes were amended so that the name Lauren Siembas was changed to “Lauren Siembab.” The amended minutes were **approved by a unanimous voice vote**.

#### **III. NEXT STEPS FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT WHITE PAPER**

The topic turned to the white paper on the positive impact of pro-social relations. Karl Lewis and his boss were commended for their hard work putting together the handout of 72 recommendations and DOC’s comments on each one. It was noted that for many, discussion and/or agreements are in progress.

The gist of the white paper was discussed. It was noted that the assertions maintained in the paper are backed up by research results. It shows that the significance of pro-social relations for offenders must be taken seriously. Improving social relations will make a big difference for inmates coming back into the community and will help reduce recidivism. It is well documented that positive pro-social relations are a key ingredient in changing offenders.

It was suggested that the recommendations should be categorized in a way that will make them easier to address and evaluate. It should be noted which ones require legislation, funding, and collaboration, and which ones are achievable administratively or where departments feel they can act within their own resources. Some recommendations won’t require much effort; many can change at little or no cost and simply require policy change.

Others are much broader and have financial implications or require significant effort at the legislative/state level.

It was decided that the committee will prioritize the recommendations. The easy ones can be presented to DOC, while the more complicated ones can be brought to the sentencing commission. Perhaps during this process, the relevant departments and organizations can provide feedback on what they can do. It was agreed there should be a follow-up meeting with DOC.

The next step is to create a working group to determine how best to proceed.

#### **IV. NEXT STEPS FOR RECIDIVISM REDUCTION COMMITTEE**

A hand-out of some of the committee's recommendations and DOC's response was provided to the attendees. The first issue discussed was the cost of phone calls to inmates. It is important to examine what rates people are paying for calls across the board. Some states have taken action to lower rates, while others have not. There are two aspects of this issue; the rates that are offered by the phone companies, and the commission (what's being negotiated/divided between the state and the phone company). Prisons maintain their own phone systems, but the FCC regulates the price of phone calls. The regulatory process is long and there is no guarantee that the FCC will act to address the cost of calls despite media attention to the issue. There is some political will to stand up for this issue. It can't be assumed that the federal government is going to address this problem, there should be local efforts. This issue can be addressed on both the legislative and regulatory level.

One member suggested that it may be a good to get an idea of the actual impact that current prison phone call rates have as compared to regular phone rates. Sarah Russell agreed to look into this, perhaps by interviewing families and obtaining anecdotal stories. It was noted that this issue is an outgrowth of the paper on social impact. The members agreed that this recommendation should be endorsed by the committee. The process for this and financial implications were discussed. It was noted that there are people who are willing to listen and support this issue.

Next, the committee discussed which topics it should bring to the table for legislative proposals. The committee wanted to determine whether or not these proposals can be added to the agenda for the public hearing on November 8<sup>th</sup>. The process for the hearing will be determined by the steering committee by October 31<sup>st</sup>. It is likely that the process will include providing a 1 page description of the proposal and hearing the public's opinion on it.

The recommendations for phone call rates can be presented as something the committee is researching, but the specifics will be vague as the committee is not ready to take action.

## **V. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC HEARING)**

The committee discussed which topics it would like to add to the list of proposals that would be brought forth for the public hearing on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

The first item to be considered was the recommendation addressing phone call rates for inmates. This topic will be considered at the next working group meeting.

The next suggestion was a recommendation regarding child support enforcement. Sometimes child support accrues while individuals are incarcerated and they get out of jail in debt. People have to apply to get child support put on hold, but it seems that offenders with sentences under 2 years often do not get the paperwork which informs them to ask for a hold on child support until release. There seems to be a gap in policy between what happens and what's supposed to happen. It was suggested that there be a policy change or administrative procedure to fix this gap. It is an issue of court support enforcement. This issue will require further research. Andrew Clark agreed to forward a report on court support enforcement to the co-chairs of the committee. They will continue to gather information, look at the report and then discuss it when the working group meets.

The white paper was discussed, and it was agreed that a summary page would be put together for the public hearing, and questions could solicit public comment.

The final item discussed was the bill reforming the contract relationships between the state and Trinity College and Quinnipiac University. The legislative proposal received a favorable report and ultimately died at the end of legislative session.

## **VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was discussed.

## **VII. MEETING ADJOURNED.**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.